

A

VINDICATION

OF

A DEMOSTHENES

FROM THE

CHARGE OF CORRUPTION.

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

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S I R,

YOU may remember, the other day, when we were discoursing upon the conduct of Demosthenes, I discovered such a tenderness for his memory as an honest man, as well as an orator, that you upbraided me with partiality; and, when I had endeavoured to maintain what I had thrown out, by insisting on some observations with regard to the principal affair, in which he is accused of corruption, the affair with Harpalus, you told me I contradicted the testimony of all antiquity, and charged me with presumption.

I do not know whether I ought to repeat what I said, but I cannot help replying, that, if my partiality, as you called it, come out upon enquiry to be nothing more than an affection for injured merit, you yourself must not only allow it to be a laudable, but to deserve a more honourable name, and to assume the character of justice; and if my presumption appeared to arise not merely from a love of novelty, but should prove to be supported by the concurrent sense of great writers, and the circumstances of the fact itself on the very face of it, you would indulge that presumption, and call it not only a proper attention to authority but to reason.

In saying this, perhaps I might be carried too far by the warmth which is, you know, agreeable to the nature, and constitutes the spirit, of conversation: but I own to you, I never experience more pleasure, than in endeavouring to find the geniuses of different ages and countries, whose actions have engaged the pens of historians, and the admiration of posterity, free from those blemishes, which the ill nature of the envious, or the prejudice of party may have thrown on their behaviour. It is indeed for the credit of eloquence, that its greatest professors should be in every respect its greatest ornament; and I sit down therefore with perfect satisfaction to obey your commands, by giving my reasons at large, why I am disposed to think there is no colour for accusing Demosthenes of corruption. At the same time I would not be thought so sanguine in defence of a favourite hypothesis, as not to admit that in all enquiries which depend on imperfect evidence, we can only arrive at a certain degree of probability, and that such a one as may serve to unsettle the credit of the opinion we adopt, rather than to establish the contrary.

No man's character was ever more examined, traduced, or exalted, by his contemporaries, than the character of Demosthenes. As, from his entrance

into the administration he set himself early to oppose the measures of Philip, those writers, who were the pensioners and dependents of that prince, were solicitous to frame every piece of scandal that could lessen his weight in Athens, or increase their own. I would not insist on this topic, or draw out any arguments to evince it; it is enough that every incident of his life shews that he had a constant struggle with the ambition of Macedonia, the malice of his enemies, and the levity of the people. Plutarch * affirms, that those who had written libels against him were not a few. Aristides †, in refuting Plato, who had cried down rhetoric in his *Gorgias*, from the ill lives of those who excelled in it, after having defended Themistocles, Cimon, and Pericles, from the invectives of that philosopher, speaks to this effect; that though we may not perhaps be moved to find that Plato, the first among the Greeks, should claim a right to be singular in opinion, and take the freedom to condemn eloquence and orators, yet methinks it must raise our indignation very greatly, that men of little or no merit should pretend from hence to blame both, and even dare, by forced conclusions, to depreciate the merit of Demosthenes. Lucian ‡, in his encomium of Demosthenes, expresses himself very strongly as to the affair of the bribe from Harpalus, and tells us that "Hyperides, who had a mind to make his court to the people, was not ashamed to be the instrument in a false charge against Demosthenes, but that the people afterwards repented, and his return was more glorious than that of Alcibiades." So that it must be allowed on the one hand, we ought to be cautious in believing, in general, what is delivered to his disadvantage, because there were so many that acted either by motives of resentment, or a desire of recommending themselves, and were industrious to make exceptions to his conduct; and on the other, we find those facts in particular not only to have been doubted, but denied, by a writer of uncommon learning and reputation.

I am sensible that the judgment of Plutarch in this case seems to go against us; and he relates the story in a manner that gives one reason to apprehend he believed it; but in the comparison between Demosthenes and Cicero, he writes more uncertainly. "He ¶ was accused," says he, "of receiving bribes from Persia, and condemned on Harpalus's account. Though we should grant that these are falsehoods invented by his enemies, who were not a few, yet we cannot deny that Demosthenes was unable to resist the

* Edit. Francof. 1599. t. i. p. 887.

† Phot. Biblioth. ex Aristid. p. 1312. Ed. Schott. 1653.

‡ A commentator of no note has ventured to affirm, that the piece concerning Demosthenes is not Lucian's, though it is written with all the ease, vivacity, and fancy of that author. *Esse non videtur Luciani, sed alicujus Lucianum κακοζήλουτος*. To so peremptory and so unsupported a determination, it is enough to give the old answer, *Valeat quantum valere potest*. Vid. Lucian. t. i. p. 685. Ed. Amst. 1687.

¶ Plut. t. i. p. 887.

"gracious

"gracious presents sent to him by kings; nor is this unlikely, considering he "was one who lent out his money upon bottomry."—A practice esteemed dishonourable in Greece.—From which passage I think it may fairly be inferred, that this diligent biographer * was by no means satisfied with the testimonies upon which these actions are founded; and though he suspects them to be true, it is because he condemns Demosthenes for accepting the favours of princes (which he might do in many circumstances consistently with his integrity); and because he hazarded some part of his private fortune in the insurance of ships, a traffic become infamous for no other reason, than on occasion of the exorbitant usury extorted by some persons concerned in it, and which it is not said Demosthenes was guilty of. For otherwise we may suppose Æschines would not have omitted to take notice of it in the speech against Ctesiphon. The argument of Plutarch turns intirely, you see, upon what he apprehends to be probable from Demosthenes' love of money. But I am disposed to think he has suffered himself to be drawn aside by the enemies of our orator; because, if it cannot be made out that he once gave an advice to the Athenians contrary to the honour and interest of the state, or to his own dignity, then is it not more reasonable to imagine, his opposers were induced, from sinister views, to vilify him by every art of defamation, than that he was tempted by those views on every occasion to give the wisest counsels? Quintilian adds weight to this sentiment (xii. 1.) where he declares that he can by no means credit all that the enemies of Demosthenes had said of him, when his excellent measures in the administration of public business are considered, and his noble exercise of it.

Thus far you will permit me to proceed in arguing from the general tenor of his actions. But as I am persuaded that this can amount only to the lowest degree of probability, since the greatest men are often false to their own honest sentiments and honest practice, and by one unaccountable instance of misconduct, cancel in the eyes of the world the merit and integrity of a whole life, I shall be far from resting the thing here, but proceed in the next place to strengthen the positive testimony of Lucian with another from the accurate Pausanias †, and to oppose both against the more diffident one of Plutarch.

* Perhaps the credit of the testimony esteemed to be given against Demosthenes by Plutarch may be greatly lessened, when we consider his general way of writing. He pretends not to value himself either on selecting with the utmost exactness, or on ranging in chronological order, the stories he gives us of great men. It was his design to collect the most remarkable, of what kind soever, that are recorded of them, sometimes interposing his judgment, but generally neglecting to do it. If we take not this thought along with us in turning over that inestimable treasure of ancient history, we shall frequently find it impossible to acquit a man of very comprehensive parts and knowledge, from the most absurd and ridiculous credulity.

† Corinth. p. 148 Edit. Han. 1615.

In his *Corinthiacs*, speaking of the little island of Calauria, and the temple of Neptune, where Demosthenes died, he says, "Within the inclosure of that temple there is a tomb erected in memory of him." Then he adds, "A great deal has been said by Demosthenes himself, and others, to shew, that he never took the bribe from Harpalus, I will tell you what has been affirmed since. As soon as Harpalus had run away from the city, he embarked for Crete, where, some say, he was murdered by his servants, and others, by one Pausanias. In the mean time Philoxenus, the Macedonian, who had demanded the satrapy from the Athenians, seized his treasurer, who had fled to Rhodes, examined him severely till he had learned what orators had shared in the money, and being informed who they were, he wrote a letter to Athens, in which he named them all, with the sum they had accepted, but made no mention of Demosthenes, although he was the greatest enemy of Alexander, and Philoxenus had a private pique against him." This is a very strong circumstance in our favour. What would you think now, if I could give you some ground to suspect that the story of the treatment our orator received in the assembly of the people is fictitious and of small weight, though this by no means affects the general turn of the argument. Plutarch* tells us, that the morning after Demosthenes had taken the bribe, the rumour of his corruption was spread among the people, a circumstance extremely incredible, as the affair would be transacted with secrecy, and there could be no room for immediately mistrusting him, who had declared himself for some time single in opposition to the satrapy. He proceeds thus: On his appearing muffled up in the assembly, when it was expected he should speak to the matter in question, the people laughed, and said, he had a silver quincy, an *Αργυράρχη* instead of a *Συνάρχη*. But it is extremely remarkable, that we find A. Gellius, in his *N. A.* xi. 9. reciting a fact from Critolaus, an old historian, in all its circumstances exactly parallel to that of the bribe from Harpalus. It is concerning the behaviour of this orator towards ambassadors from Miletus. He had first interested himself, according to the account there given, against the Milesians, and then was prevailed on, for a sum of money, to be silent. It is said, that in the morning after his taking it, he came into the assembly, excused himself from speaking because of the swelling in his throat, and the people threw out the very same jest. One of these, you will agree, must probably be false, and perhaps the credit of both may be affected.

You must have observed that Pausanias says, Philoxenus had insisted that the Athenians should give up Harpalus before the flight and examination of his treasurer. And Diodorus† Siculus informs us, that Antipater and Olym-

* Vit. Demosth. t. i. p. 857.

† Page 620. Edit. H. Steph. 1559.

pius, who were left regents in Macedonia, had demanded him in the name of Alexander. Plutarch too, in his treatise *περί δυνάμεως* *, confirms the relation of Pausanias, where he recites a bon mot of Demosthenes, when the Athenians had made preparation to assist Harpalus against Alexander, and were alarmed at the sudden appearance of Philoxenus, intended to intimidate them. "How," cries he, "will you be able to look at the sun, when you cannot support the light of a candle?"

Hence I argue further, if one thing can be called more likely than another in the various and capricious dispositions of men, it is extremely so, that Demosthenes, after having resisted this solicitation, to which every orator in Athens but himself had yielded, after having advised the Athenians, in direct opposition to their opinion, to surrender the satrape, and this too, before Alexander could attend to the punishment of a bad minister, should rather adhere to this advice in the settlement of that prince in Babylon, when the Athenians themselves came warm into it, when the interests of Harpalus were entirely deserted, when his treasurer had fled, when his person was seized, and a commission of enquiry into his wealth set on foot by the assembly, at the head of which Demosthenes was placed. These circumstances are agreed on all hands; and it is added, that he drew up the decree which banished the perfidious minister from the city of Athens. Would he then, while the decree was depending in the assembly, have wantonly exposed his character to the mercy of his enemies, and his person to the resentment of Alexander and of his countrymen, by favouring Harpalus, at the expence too of differing from himself, without any gloss or colour laid over the glaring corruption, for the sake of twenty talents and a golden cup? This is a piece of infatuation below any man of common sense, much more below the wisdom of Demosthenes. Our orator was at that time possessed of a large fortune. He therefore wanted not the riches of the satrape. He was possessed of great power in the country, and had not long before defeated Æschines, his most formidable competitor. He was, therefore, obnoxious † to the jealousy of an unsteady people ‡. It is true, the trial (of which I shall speak presently) went against him: yet we ought not for that reason to pronounce the action a just one; because it is well known upon what slender evidence, to

* T. ii. p. 531.

† Plutarch says, that the accusers of Demosthenes, and the Macedonian faction, were very strong in the city at this time. Vit. Demosth. t. i. p. 857.

‡ If it be said, I have in some places of this essay intimated, that the ill usage given to Demosthenes arose from the influence of one party, and its aversion to his measures, and in others imputed it to the general unsteadiness of the Athenian people, I would observe, that this seeming contradiction is easy to be reconciled: for though the Macedonian faction might persecute Demosthenes because of his honest opposition to their treacherous designs, yet they drew a majority of the assembly after them, under the specious pretext of danger to the state from his ambition.

gratify

gratify what piques, the Athenians were used to exile their most deserving citizens by ostracisms in former times; and notwithstanding that custom was laid aside in these days, this national temper broke out in another way against Demosthenes, who, like his predecessors, Themistocles and Cimon, had acquired an extraordinary influence. This might be the only crime he was guilty of, and Pausanias * seems to be of that opinion, who says, that in him fortune gave a singular instance of her inconstancy. We are told by Plutarch †, as I have intimated above, that Demosthenes, being the most zealous man in the city against Harpalus, was employed to draw up an account of the money he had brought along with him from Babylon, and to secure him in the citadel. After this commission, he was accused of having given in a false account to the people, and suffering the satrape to escape, by conniving at the negligence of his keepers. At that time the story of the bribe is said to have come out, aggravated with this notable absurdity, that he should not have had a more than ordinary guard upon himself, when he was exercising an office, which, from the nature of it, should give an occasion to his adversaries of infusing jealousy, yet he had so extraordinary a one when every body else was interested, either through weakness or corruption, in Harpalus's favour. At that time also the witticism conveyed in the new coined word, ἀργυράγχη, was uttered in the assembly, when Demosthenes rose to defend himself, and the people would not hear him. The same author ‡ tells us, that somebody called out, "Will not you hear the man that has the cup in his possession?" And Athenæus || has recorded, that another man said, "He who is used to upbraid his neighbours with drinking off large cup-fulls has swallowed a great one."

One would conjecture from the various pleasantries which are preserved to us, that there was a formed design to cry down Demosthenes. For otherwise it were natural to imagine he would have been treated with more tenderness, or, at least, with more respect and fairness. Those who are acquainted with the nature of popular assemblies, will easily perceive what an effect these suggestions must have had in the minds of a volatile set of men, and what an impression they must have made to the disadvantage of Demosthenes, among such as were always studious to humble the pride of ministers.

All this he endured with great steadiness; and that his credit might not be oppressed by popular clamours arising from private resentment, he consented not only to a strict enquiry, but moved a vote ¶, that the magistrates of Areopagus should hear evidence of the fact, and that those who were convicted should be banished. The houses of the orators, whom the assembly

* Pausan. p. 148.

† Plutarch, t. ii. p. 846.

‡ Plutarch. t. i. p. 857.—Εν γὰρ τοῖς συμπέσεισι τὴν κύλικα ἔχοντες ᾗδον τὰ λεγόμενα Σκολία.

|| Athen. l. vi. p. 245. Lugd. 1657

¶ Plutarch. t. i. p. 857.

suspected

suspected were searched; but we are informed that nothing was discovered by this means which could affect the character of Demosthenes, a circumstance too considerable to have been omitted by Plutarch, had it proved so. He was indeed the first who suffered in the prosecution; but I would draw an argument in his favour from his proposing a trial, since, as Dinarchus very strongly puts it, with a design of aggravating the charge, he was the only one of those that were accused, who of his own accord demanded the Areopagitic council for his judges, drew up the decree concerning it, and enacted, that the punishment of death should be inflicted upon those who were found guilty. An instance either of singular temerity, or of a proper confidence in his own integrity.

His condemnation seems, from a passage in Photius's life of Demosthenes, and another in the life inserted amongst those of the ten orators, in the second volume of Plutarch, and commonly ascribed to that philosopher, to have been owing to the fear of the judges, and the practice of his adversaries. Photius gives us the names of his accusers, among whom Hyperides was one, as Lucian also informs us. This man, he adds, prevailed in the Areopagus to find him guilty, which is expressed by *κατισκινῶσι*, a word not uncommonly used in a bad sense. It is remarkable Photius does not tell us that he believed the fact; he only says, that the orator was accused, and, with his usual brevity, suitable to the dry genius of an abridger of history, intimates his suspicion in the manner of relating, without entering into the thing explicitly, that the whole was a fiction of his enemies. The same circumstance is expressed in the other life by *ισχυρισμὸν καταγυνῆαι*. If this then be the truth of the case, the judgment given against Demosthenes reflects dishonour on the court of Areopagus; and it is hard to imagine that the integrity of that venerable tribunal could be preserved amidst a very general corruption. The oration made against Demosthenes by Dinarchus* can be but of little consequence in this question, since it was spoken to the people after he was condemned by the Areopagus. The fact is all along taken for granted, and it reads like the performance of a pleader, not of a judge. He was a man of a profligate mercenary character, and was hired by the accusers of Demosthenes

* Dionysius Halicarnassensis, in the life of Dinarchus, says, after Demetrius Magn. that this oration is not genuine; but its authority has been admitted by some writers. I have, from a passage in it, drawn an argument in favour of Demosthenes whose validity will not be affected by supposing the speech to be spurious, because this argument is well established from a passage in Plutarch. If Demetrius's opinion be allowed, the credit of the oration is destroyed; that is, of no testimony against Demosthenes. Vid. Dion. Halic. t. ii. p. 179. Ed. Ox. 1704.

The Sophists used to write Accusations or Defences in this manner, as scholastic exercises of their wit and eloquence. The Oration against Demosthenes imputed to Dinarchus was probably such, written several years after his death, and in process of time believed to be real, agreeable to the fate of Polycrates's charge against Socrates, which Dr. Bentley has proved, beyond all contradiction, to have been fictitious, though its authenticity has been admitted by Hermippus, Quintilian, and other great writers. It is from hence he brings an excellent proof of the spuriousness of the 17th Epistle of Xenophon. Wotton on Learning, p. 415.

to draw up speeches for them. It is recorded, that he made several on that occasion. Phot. Biblioth. Vit. Dinarch. p. 1484. Plutarch. t. ii. p. 850.

There are some circumstances still remaining, which I confess have their weight with me. Had so scandalous a charge been credited by the Greeks in general, they would not at the same time have shewn such regard to him in many places (Plut. t. i. p. 858.) and have received his counsels with attention when he solicited succours on the death of Alexander in favour of the common cause; or, had it been credited by the Athenians in particular, it is not to be thought such numbers of them, as Helladius tells the story (Phot. ex Hellad. p. 1592) would have followed him out of the city, many of them carrying him money, procuring him recommendations, all of them exhorting him to be of good cheer, and to bear his misfortunes with resolution*; nor would his character have been able to support itself in such an instance of a fordid spirit, not to say, of an absurd understanding. He was recalled (Diod. says, l. 18.) within a year after his banishment, with the highest marks of honour; and, as Plutarch attests, his countrymen paid the fine for him. A trireme was sent by the city to transport him from Ægina, and when he landed at the Piræum, there was not an archon, priest, or person of any distinction in the city, who did not come out to meet him, and embrace him: so that Demetrius Magn. reports, Demosthenes blessed the day of his return, because it was more glorious than that of Alcibiades. (Plut. t. i. p. 858.) M. Dacier thinks the Athenians were so fond of repartees, that they recalled Demosthenes, not so much for his good services, as for a good thing which he threw out in answer to Pytheas, who endeavoured to alienate the cities of Greece from one another, and to persuade them to pay homage to Antipater; but I am willing to suppose this people acted on more solid motives, and were sensible of his real attachment to their interests: they knew they had obliged him to consult his safety by a voluntary exile, for the same reason that they had banished their best citizens; and the same levity of mind which made them jealous of the greatness they had raised, made them no less warm in expressing their repentance. I even think the sharp and bitter reflections which are said to have escaped Demosthenes, a confirmation of what I have advanced to prove, that he was condemned, not so much because the accusation of bribery was either made out or believed, as because of the envy he had incurred on account of his superior virtue. He upbraided Minerva with having chosen three monsters for her favourites, the owl, the dragon, and the people of Athens; he advised all the young people, who went

* Φέρειν τὴν συμφορὰν γυναικί. Usus hujus nominis Συμφ. passim receptus significationem generalem restringens ponit non simpliciter pro Ἀπόβασις, sed pro κακῇ Ἀπόβασις, quamvis semel affertur ex Euripide pro successu, et ex Xerodoto pro utilitate. H. Steph. v. Φίσι.

to see and converse with him in his exile, not to meddle with state matters; he told them, that if he had been acquainted with the fears, suspicions, and labours he had gone through, before he entered into the administration, and the choice of death or the rostrum had been proposed to him, he would have preferred the former; and I cannot understand with what face he could accuse his countrymen of ingratitude, in the letter he wrote to the senate and people during his absence (if the letters imputed to him are his) had he not known the baseness of the calumny, and relied on the consciousness of his innocence. Let me add, that it is obvious to remark a manifest inconsistency in those writers, who seem to admit the fact of his being bribed by Harpalus, and yet blame his sorrow (Plutarch, t. i. p. 858.) because generous minds are most affected with remorse for ill actions. One would be apt to fancy, therefore, they give little credit to the accusation, as if they had not explained themselves on that head with sufficient perspicuity.

After the defeat of the Athenians at the battle of Cranon, a garrison of Macedonian soldiers took possession of Fort Munychia, and Demades drew up a decree, in presence of an embassy from Antipater, by which the people condemned Demosthenes, and those of his party, to death*. In the mean time they fled out of the city, and took refuge in Calauria. The circumstances of his death are well known, and I will not enlarge on them. Plutarch speaks very elegantly concerning it (t. i. p. 888.). The temple of Neptune unable to afford him a secure asylum, he fled to a more inviolable altar, and rescuing himself from the hands of his keeper, expressed his contempt for the cruelty of Antipater. His countrymen, filled † with a sense of his uniformity
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* The people must have been intimidated into this step by the victory of Antipater, and the armed force which entered the city. As soon as they recovered their spirits (which was not long after) they shewed a great veneration for the memory of Demosthenes; and it appears throughout their whole behaviour to him, that however they might at different times be wilfully induced, or blindly misled, to prejudice so excellent a statesman, yet whenever the uncorrupted genius of the Athenians could exert itself, they made his person or his credit some amends for the errors or iniquities which had proceeded from an unnatural faction.

† Should it be objected, that attending Demosthenes out of the city, re-calling him from exile with so many honours, and paying such regard to him and his family after his death, was, perhaps, owing in the first of these cases to the affection, and in the rest, to the power of his party, and not in any, to the general opinion held among the Athenians of his innocence; it may be answered, that none of the historians throw out the least intimation of this nature, and all of them explicitly assert, or clearly insinuate, the contrary. In truth, it is natural to imagine, that the Macedonian faction must have been uppermost in the city, not only during the period of his first banishment, but from the time of his second banishment to the death of Antipater, as no instance is mentioned of any resolution taken after that time (except decreeing a statue to the memory of our orator) which could be disagreeable to that faction. But granting the objection, we may give it a fair turn, to the purpose of our argument. For if it is probable (considering the fluctuating state of parties in Athens) that these honours were shewn to Demosthenes when his friends at different times had most credit, it is
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equally

in opposing the intrigues of Macedonia, notwithstanding the offence it must give to their new masters, decreed a statue to his memory, and that his children should be maintained at the public expence, in the Prytaneum; because, as it is said in the decree, he had been a good counsellor to the city, and had done those things which were calculated to support their liberties and constitution. Pausanias tells us, in his Attics, p. 14. he saw the statue; and of his death says, this was the event of that great orator's extreme benevolence to his commonwealth. It was well observed, "that he who devotes himself wholly to the interest of his country, confiding on the gratitude of the people shall never die in peace." Such sentiments of regard, methinks, would have proceeded from no writers, nor would they have called his exile a misfortune, if they had believed the story of the bribe; neither would the Athenians have paid him and his posterity those honours, in spite of Antipater and his tools, if they had not admired his integrity as well as his abilities.

I persuade myself you will think the usage, which Antipater gave Demosthenes was highly odious to the Athenians, and tended to weaken his interest, when you reflect on what has been urged, and recollect further what Plutarch declares, t. i. p. 850. Demades himself at last grew weary of the tyrant, and invited Perdiccas into Greece, telling him, that it hung on a very rotten thread. But Demades was betrayed by Dinarchus, before the plot could be carried into execution, and suffered for it.

It is from this circumstance I would conjecture, that Antipater, or Demades and Dinarchus (who were his instruments) might, in order to lessen the grief of the Athenians for the death of Demosthenes, employ several writers to vilify and traduce his character, and hence might rise that swarm of libels*, to which Quintilian gives no credit, which Plutarch says were not a few, and Aristides complains of. Nor can it be thought chimerical to suppose (though it is to be wished it were said) that the partisans of Antipater in the city might pass the decree in honour of Demosthenes and his family, which could not be

equally probable, he was accused and disgraced when they had less and his enemies more. So that if in the one case the city was influenced by a party to extravagant panegyric without respecting the real character of the man, we may conclude, on the other, that it was influenced to a severe condemnation by the opposite party, without respecting justice or truth.

* It was not unusual for the Sophists to invent stories of the great men of antiquity, as subjects of declamation in their schools. Demosthenes appears to have shared the same fate with others in this way, which was perhaps a new source of calumny, not usually attended to by the generality of historians. One instance of this is to be found in the *Ethopoia* of Severus the Sophist, where words are put into the mouth of Æschines, on his finding an image of Philip in the house of Demosthenes. In the same collection there is a speech supposed to be made by Æschines to his adversary on receiving money from him, as he was retiring privately out of the city into banishment. This last story is in all probability equally spurious with the first, though mentioned by many authors: Rhet. Select. Edit. Oxon. 1676. p. 216, 218.

considered

considered otherwise than a reproach for the ill-usage he had received from those men, as a public censure of the resolution which drove him a second time out of the city, and of those measures which produced his death. We may suppose too that Demades and the Macedonian orators would take an opportunity in the course of the debate (for the motion would certainly occasion a debate) to repeat the low scandal they could draw together from all quarters, and represent him as unworthy the favour of his country. From hence might arise the insinuation, which history has transmitted to us in a dark and confused manner, concerning the bribes he took from the court of Persia, to which himself gave a handle, because he counselled the Athenians to enter into an alliance with Darius, a scheme that appears in truth to have been the effect of policy and penetration, not of avarice and corruption.

He alone opposed himself to the artifice of Philip, the enthusiasm of Alexander, the cruelty and injustice of Antipater, fighting to his last moments for the interests of his country; was its most resolute as well as its most able champion; left the world when it was deserted by all that is worthy the praise, the activity, or the attention of a wise man; expired with the cause of virtue and of liberty; and he who is buried in their ruins is happier than he who survives them.

Such, Sir, are the reasons on which I would aim to establish a vindication of Demosthenes; and though you may think there is scarcely evidence enough to acquit him, I am sure there is less to condemn him. In cases of this nature, a few positive testimonies are of more consequence than a world of circumstances, and yet circumstantial evidence has this advantage over positive evidence, that whereas two or three witnesses may concur in supporting a lie with uniformity and consistency, it is scarcely possible that a variety of circumstances and contingencies can agree in the support of any thing but truth, or in exposing any thing but falsehood. For my own part, I do not wonder that unfavourable sentiments have been frequently entertained of Demosthenes. It is no hard task to persuade men of the defects in great characters, because we are well acquainted with the weakness of human nature; but the secret difficulties which attend the actors in political proceedings, and which can neither be explained or prevented, they have not ordinarily the opportunity to know, the candour to weigh, or the wisdom to understand. This I take to have been the fate of Demosthenes. No man ever struggled with more opposition in public business except Cicero, whom the voice of every age has placed in competition with him, and who had the benefit of copying from the Greek orator, with the merit of being himself an original. I will even venture to add, that, considering the jarring opinions, and more jarring interests, of men, few ever acted on this divided stage with greater rectitude and honour than Demosthenes; even Plato would have retracted his censure against the ill lives of the rhetoricians,

rhetoricians, and spared the copious labours of Aristides, had he been acquainted with the future worth of his countryman Demosthenes, or known that an orator was to arise out of his own school*, who would reconcile those two qualities, which himself had long thought incompatible, to the disgrace of both *eloquence and honesty*.

* Fertur audivisse Platonem.

Cic.

F I N I S.

